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ABSTRACT

A study compared information made available to the media by the White House with information provided to the public by the media to examine the extent to which the White House information agenda influenced the media's agenda. Content analysis was used to compare information disseminated by the White House between June 1 and June 28, 1986 with news media reports published during the same period. It was hypothesized (1) that fewer than half the media news stories about the President and other policy actors would contain information provided directly by White House handouts; (2) that the news media would show a preference for White House information on certain subjects; (3) that when the news media included information provided by the White House press office in their news reports, the leads of those stories would likely emphasize the same information as the leads of the corresponding handouts; and (4) that news stories about the President or other "occupants" of the White House would usually be neutral in tone, rather than favorable or unfavorable. Three of the four hypotheses were supported: the hypothesis dealing with subjects about which the media were most likely to use White House information was supported only in part. Findings suggest that only some of the time can the White House press office focus mass media attention on subjects and specifics about which it wishes the audience to be informed. The relationship between the media and the White House might be improved if public relations sources exercised greater judgment as to what constitutes hard news and if fewer of the informational handouts were "party line" and self-serving. (Eight tables of data and 42 footnotes are appended.) (NKA)

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"Between President and Press: White House Public Information and Its Influence on the News Media"

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Introduction

A major focus of mass media research has been the influence of the media upon public consciousness, cognition and behavior. Since the early 1970s, this research has examined, among other issues, both the outcomes of exposure to the mass media and factors contributing to and mediating those media effects.

The agenda-setting concept, first enunciated by Lippman (1) and first tested empirically with the mass media in 1972 by McCombs and Shaw, (2) was an important conceptual offshoot of media effects research. Agenda-setting presumes that as the mass media, through their reporters and editors, select which events and information to include in media content, they also evaluate the salience of those events and information: information that "makes" the media's agenda is important, and information that doesn't is not. Media audiences, according to agenda-setting theory, adopt these media assessments of salience, so that the effect of the mass media is, as Cohen described it, to tell people not necessarily what to think, but what to think about. (3)

Traditional agenda-setting studies have focused most often on the effect of the media upon the public agenda of what is important. Only recently has attention been focused on agenda-setting as a broader process that begins with someone or something influencing the media agenda.

Gandy suggested in 1982 that information sources used by journalists, as well as the journalists themselves, make selections that determine what is salient enough to be included in mass media content. (4)

Four years later, Megwa and Brenner (5) proposed a paradigm that viewed agenda-setting as a process that could be used to address the question of who or what influences the media agenda. Their contention: "While it is possible that media set the agenda of the public by emphasizing certain issues, thereby forcing the attention of the public on these issues, it is also possible that the relative importance of these issues has been determined by actors other than the media, as a result of the structure of the news media...The mass media agenda-setting power is a by-product of a persuasive process involving the source and the media on the one hand, and the media and audience on the other." (6)

In the interim between the Gandy and Megwa and Brenner conceptualizations, this author studied the influence a specific group of sources -- public information officers -- had upon a specific media agenda (7), and concluded that these sources did, indeed, influence the media's agenda when their "information subsidies" to journalists were used in media content.

For those state government public information officers, slightly more than half of their attempts to influence the media agenda were successful, as slightly more than half of their information handouts were incorporated, in whole or in part, into published news stories. That finding gave rise to the research question that guided this study: how successful might other public information officers, working with different media, be at influencing the media agenda?

Therefore, this study examined the success of efforts by the White House public information staff, as sources of information about the actions and policies of the Executive Office and the President, to influence the media agenda. Specifically, the study examined whether (and how) information provided to the media by this group of sources was used in published news stories.

Examination of the efforts of the White House press office to influence the media agenda seemed particularly appropriate in light of White House complaints that the "real" White House story had not been reaching the public because the news media upon whom most segments of the public rely for information present less or different information in their news content than the President and the White House make available. (8) Among the premises behind those complaints: (1) the President needs to disseminate information, and must rely on the mass media as a vehicle for this dissemination; and (2) the Presidential and White House press or public information staffs, in whom the process of White House information dissemination has been institutionalized, perceived that media coverage of the President and his office distorted the White House version of reality that the public had a right to receive.

The President and the Media

The literature of political science and public administration is rich with references to the President's need to disseminate information about his administration's actions and policies. Grossman and Kumar address that need by noting that because the President needs popular support, the bottom line being votes, Presidential communication stakes are high: the President must be able to communicate with the public and the public must be able to get an accurate assessment of his conduct and activities. (9)

It is only through the mass media that Presidents can hope to get and keep the attention of their constituencies both inside and outside of government. (10) The mass media have been shown to determine Presidential credibility with major segments of the public. (11) Even if a good many citizens pay little attention to the media or reject media information because it clashes with already-held beliefs, (12) the media are so important as providers of information and as shapers of public opinion that Presidents must realize "that political communication as sent through and by the media play the central role in their struggle for control of political institutions." (13) A former White House press secretary even asserts that a President has a "responsibility to try and gather as much public support for his programs and his policies as he can ... through the press." (14)

Responsibility for this important Presidential communication via the news media has been vested with organized White House public relations or press staffs. Since early in this century, Presidents have recognized the advantages of establishing a system for the release of informtion that gave them control over the rules by which reporters gained access to information and individuals at the White House. (15) This White House press system is only one part of a vast public information apparatus of the federal bureaucracy, whose workers may number as many as 20,000 and whose cost to taxpayers may exceed $1 billion annually. (16)

White House press secretaries, press offices and media relations staffs coordinate a President's public information and publicity policies at the "junction point where the government and the press meet." (17) They attempt, through the volunteering of information that reflects favorably upon the President, to "squeeze more juice out of the orange," seeking to have the President dominate the news in both large and small ways. (18) But press secretaries and press staffs also choose not to volunteer some information, attempting to order White House information "in a manner ... most advantageous to its mission." (19)

Distortion and News Management

The "informational maneuvers" these press secretaries and press staffs use to disseminate the information they want disseminated -- news releases, press conferences, texts of speeches and pronouncements -- are attempts to influence media coverage and, in turn, to influence the opinions and decisions of those who obtain information from the news media. (20)

White House press office staff and the Washington press corps seem to be in almost constant conflict over which White House messages are disseminated, what White House information is available and what coverage the media give to White House events and actions. (22) Critics in the White House, including the President, "complain that the media distort and misinterpret what happens and thus scramble the President's message on its route to the
public." (23)

Both Presidents and press secretaries say the relationship between White House and media is strained by distortion. As President Jimmy Carter's press secretary Jody Powell put it, "I think the relationship between press and President is basically flawed... I think it doesn't work well in that it fails to provide the public with that quality and quantity of information that they have a right to expect and that they need in order to make the decisions that are necessary to self-
government." (24)

But several studies have concluded that media coverage of the President and of his administration and policies is generally objective, and in some cases even favorable. (25) These findings of a lack of bias in news reporting about the President may indicate that the Presidentially-perceived distortion or bias is bias of ommission of information rather than the more obvious bias of incorrect use of information in news reports.

News releases and informational handouts from press and public information staffs may exert considerable influence upon media content as research by Cutlip (26), Kaid (27), Martin and Singletary (28) and Turk (29) indicates. But many of these handouts -- as many as 48% (30) or even 75% (31) -- are not used by the media to whom they are provided. If the information contained in those unused handouts is viewed by the President and his White House staff as important to public understanding of what the President and his White House really do, them ommission of that information from news reports might be viewed as a distortion of Presidential or White House reality. The White House the public sees through the media's eyes is the media's view of reality, a media-conceived perception of what is happening and what is important, shaped by craft values of journalism. (32)

It should be noted that the media are not the only purveyors of a self-conceived reality, nor are they alone in being accused of bias and distortion. Another aspect of the adversarial relationship between White House and media is the perception on the part of media reporters and editors that the White House, particularly the White House press office, distorts reality by "managing" the news through various practices of information ommission. (33) Both White House press staffs and reporters are selective in the information they disseminate. Both "know" more than they "tell" the public. Both present an unreal reality.

Research Methods and Hypotheses

While determining what the White House "knows" but does not "tell" would seem extremely difficult, if not impossible, the task of examining what the White House tells that the media do not pass along to the public is somewhat more manageable. This study, funded by grants from The Gannett Foundation and the University of Oklahoma Associates Distinguished Lecturer Program, sought to compare information made available to the media by the White House with information provided to the public by the media, to examine the extent to which the White House information agenda influenced the media's agenda.

Content analysis was used to compare the manifest content of both White House information disseminated and news media reports published over a four-week period, between June 1 and June 28, 1986.

All items appearing in four issues of "Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents," a publication of the U.S. Government Printing Office that includes all written press releases, speech texts, interview and press conference transcripts and proclamations released to the media by the White House press office, were coded for analysis. (34)

During that same period, news stories about the White House and its occupants published by the New York Times, the Washington Post and the Norman (Oklahoma) Transcript, and those distributed by The Associated Press on its newswires, were coded and analyzed. The following data were collected on both White House and media information output:

. the format in which the information was "packaged." For instance, information disseminated by the White House might appear as a news release, the text of a Presidential speech or a fact sheet. White House information reported by the news media might appear, for example, as a news story, a feature article or an editorial.

. the length, in approximate words, of the information as disseminated by the White House press office or as reported by the news media.

. the issue or subject area addressed in White House and media output. Eighteen issue categories were identified, ranging from foreign policy to government/political scandals to agriculture to health and welfare. A "typical" foreign policy story during this time period dealt with SALT II or aid to the Nicaraguan Contras; a "typical" health and welfare story dealt with government-supported AIDS research.

. the evaluative tone of both sets of output, specifically whether the information was favorable, unfavorable or neutral toward the President and the White House.

. the sources -- individuals within or outside the White House -- to whom information in the White House and media outputs was attributed.

. the emphasis of the lead or opening paragraph of each White House handout and each published news story.

Because all coding was performed by one individual, both intra and inter-coder reliability checks were made upon a one-week sample of 306 White House handouts and published news media stories, or 31.2% of the total number of items coded. Intra-coder reliability was 95.6%, while inter-coder reliability was 92.3%.

Hypotheses tested in analyzing the data were:

. H1: Fewer than half of the news stories published in the news media about the President and other White House policy actors contain information provided directly to the media in White House handouts. And media, represented by the New York Times, Washington Post, the Norman Transcript and The Associated Press, omit from their daily news reports any mention of as much as half of the information provided by the White House press staff. Previous studies indicate that the proportion of news stories that contain some information provided by public information officers can be as low as 40%, and that the rejection rate for press releases and other public information handouts ranges from 48% to 75% (35)

. H2: The news media show a preference for White House-provided information on certain subjects (36). Specifically, they are most likely to use White House information that deals with the subject areas of foreign policy or economics, and least likely to use information on regulatory policy, based on previously-established rankings of the content of Washington news coverage. (37)

. H3: When the news media do include information provided by the White House press office in their news reports, the leads of these news stories are likely to emphasize the same information as the leads of the corresponding White House press office handouts, as has been shown to be the case in previous studies of use of public relations handouts. (38)

. H4: News stories about the President, Vice President, First Lady or Office of Management and Budget (the "occupants" of the White House) carried by the news media are more likely to be neutral than either favorable or unfavorable in tone, and the number of unfavorable stories is likely to be greater than the number that is unfavorable. This was the case with the stories about state government carried in the Louisiana newspapers studied by Turk. (39)

RESULTS

Three of the four research hypotheses were supported by the data. Fewer than one in five (146, or 17.3%) of the 846 news stories carried by the media appeared to use information provided by the White House in one of its handouts (see Table 1), and information contained in slightly fewer than one-third (39, or 29.5%) of the 132 White House handouts appeared to have been used in published stories (see Table 2). A handout or the information it contained was categorized as "used" if there was either verbatim or paraphrased duplication between all or parts of a handout and all or parts of a published news story.

As expected, the leads of those media stories that used White House information did emphasize more than half the time (58%) the same information as the leads of the White House handouts.

It should be noted that when a White House handout was presented in a non-journalistic format (a Presidential proclamation as opposed to a news release, for example), it was coded as having no lead and was categorized as having a different emphasis than a corresponding media news story. Therefore, there may have been greater agreement between White House and media in content emphasis than the numbers alone would indicate.

And the hypothesized prevalence of a neutral tone in published stories, as opposed to a tone that seemed to reflect either favorably or unfavorably upon the White House, was present in the data. More than three-fourths (661, or 78.1%) of the published stories were neutral, while 18% were unfavorable and only 3.9% were favorable. (40)

The remaining hypothesis -- dealing with subjects about which the media were most and least likely to use White House information -- was supported only in part. (41) The media were most likely to use information dealing with foreign policy, but defense, not the economy, was second on the preferred list. And consumerism, education, energy, business, political scandals and the environment all were less popular as subjects than regulatory policy (see Table 3).

WHITE HOUSE HANDOUTS

The White House press office issued 132 on-paper handouts during the 28-day period, the largest number of them (51) routine personnel appointment announcements (see Table 4). Somewhat unexpectedly, only 23 of the handouts were in the new-story format of a news release, although earlier studies of information exchanges between government press officers and the media have shown a media preference for receiving information as news releases. (42)

Almost two-thirds (86, or 65.2%) of the handouts dealt with domestic issues or topics, and a few (5, or 3.8%) dealt with international and domestic issues simultaneously.

Almost one handout in four (32, or 24.2%) dealt with the subject of foreign policy, hardly surprising since June found President Reagan in the midst of two newsworthy foreign policy issues: his "boycott" of Salt II arms control talks and his request that Congress appropriate U. S. aid to the Nicaraguan Contra forces.

These foreign policy handouts tended to be somewhat longer than those dealing with other topics: 11 of the 32 foreign policy handouts were longer than 1000 words, a larger proportion than for any other topic category.

While foreign policy matters, ranked number one among White House subjects, also were number one with the news media, the subject-matter priorities the White House demonstrated generally in its handouts were otherwise quite different from those of the media (see Table 5).

If one infers that the number of times a subject or issue is mentioned -- and the length of the written item on that subject or issue -- is an indication of where that subject ranks on an agenda of salient issues, then it appears that the White House and the news media generally agree that foreign policy matters are most important. But it also is quite clear that the White House and the media have different priorities when it comes to the longer list of all the information they put forth for consumption.

White House handouts dealing with the subject or issue of government investigations (primarily of the Challenger spacecraft tragedy), ceremonial activities (Reagan's upcoming participation in various Independence Day celebrations), foreign policy or regulatory policy (regarding immigration and biotechnology) were most likely to be used by the news media.

Least likely to be used -- with not a single handout used -- were the subjects or issues of business, energy, education, consumer affairs, health and welfare, and the environment (see Table 6).

An examination of the formats of foreign policy handouts -- which were among the handouts most likely to be used -- indicated they were most likely to be in the form of a news release or the transcript of an interview or press conference. More of the President's speeches during this time period also dealt with foreign policy than with any other topic (4 of 17) and all of the drafts of legislation released by the White House press office during this period (4) dealt with foreign policy matters.

Almost two-thirds (86, or 65.15%) of the White House handouts addressed domestic issues or topics, with government operations, health and welfare, business and the economy the domestic topic or issue most often addressed. The only topics and issues addressed in international handouts were, and not too surprisingly, foreign policy (28 handouts), defense (8), the economy (4), and the environment and natural resources (1).

The source to whom information in the White House handouts was attributed most often was President Reagan (in 113 of the 132 handouts), with a White House press spokesman identified by name or by title the next most frequently-attributed source.

It might be intriguing to speculate on the political implications of the fact that neither the Vice President nor the Director of the Office of Management and Budget -- the other executives in the Executive Office -- was the attributed source in a single White House handout. All but six of the handouts attributed information to just one source, and that source was without exception someone inside the White House.

In contrast, almost two thirds of the published news stories attributed information about the White House to multiple sources, and more often than not the sources mentioned were a combination of sources both inside and outside the White House. The President was the sole attributed source of information for only 64 (7.6%) of the published stories.

Average length of the White House handouts was slightly longer than 600 words, incredibly the same average length as the published news stories. More than three-quarters of the handouts were neutral in tone, but most of the remainder (28, or 21.2%) were favorable to the President and his administration, compared with only 3.9% of the published news stories that were favorable in tone.

PUBLISHED NEWS STORIES

The largest number of news stories dealing with the President and his Executive Office were published in The New York Times (245, or 29% of the total 846), with The Washington Post accounting for almost as many (218, or 25.8%). It was not surprising that The Norman Transcript carried only 86 stories during the 28-day period, given its small news hole. But it was interesting to note that those 86 stories represented slightly more than half of the stories carried on the interbureau wire of The Associated Press, the only major wire service to which the Transcript subscribes and the source of these 86 stories.

More than two-thirds (577, or 68.2%) of the published stories were hard news (see Table 7). Certain subjects or issues tended to cluster in certain published formats, although the tendency was not statistically significant.

For instance, published information about legislation proposed by the President tended to attract more media commentary than any other subject matter, as it was carried most often in the format of a signed column or editorial. Most of those columns and editorials were unfavorable to the President's position; in fact, published stories dealing with legislation were more likely than those in most other subject categories to be unfavorable (see Table 8).

Published stories were quite evenly divided between domestic and international stories, with 51.8% being domestic in scope and fewer than 1% of the stories combining domestic and international subjects or issues in one story. As was true for White House handouts, the largest number of international stories dealt with foreign policy issues (almost one in three). All stories dealing with politics, regulatory policy, energy, education, consumer affairs and political scandals were domestic in scope, while the only stories to combine domestic and international perspectives dealt with foreign policy or defense.

With the exception of complete-text reproduction of 4 of Reagan's speeches and 1 Presidential proclamation, the published stories -- including those that appeared to use information from White House handouts -- were reporter-generated copy rather than verbatim White House handouts.

While the President was the single most-often-cited source in a published news story (in 64 or 14.9% of the stories), reporters most often attributed information in their stories to multiple sources -- and seemed to prefer a combination of White House and external sources.

Almost half of all published stories (395, or 46.7%) attributed information to a combination of internal and external sources, with another 147 stories relying on multiple White House attributions, usually the President and one of the White House press secretaries. Clearly, even when reporters used White House information, they went out of their way to supplement it in their stories with information from other sources.

This pattern of media attribution seems consistent with two journalistic craft values demonstrated time and again in reporter behavior. One is that information should be verified by at least two sources before it is "good" or "safe" enough to use (a multiple source approach). The other is that public relations sources are generally biased in favor of the individuals or organizations they represent, and that, therefore, what they say must be taken with a grain of salt and checked against other, less-biased sources who aren't beholden to those individuals or organizations.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The White House press office, through its "information subsidies," seems able to focus mass media attention on subjects and specifics about which it wants the media audience to be informed -- at least a portion of the time. Every handout "used" by the media, and every published story that includes information provided to journalists by the White House press staff, is a success story for White House attempts to influence the media agenda, a "victory" for the agenda-setting function of public relations sources.

But this "influence peddling" was unsuccessful more often than not. And that gives rise to several observations about how relationships between the White House and the media -- or perhaps between any entity and the media -- might be improved.

From the standpoint of the media, the relationship might be improved if public relations sources exercised greater judgment as to what is hard news -- and refrained from issuing news releases or speech texts or proclamations that aren't hard news. Features or proclamations or verbatim transcripts of speeches or interviews just don't sell very well to journalists trained to say it's news only if there are 5Ws and an H in the lead. If more public relations "information subsidies" were hard news, then perhaps the proportion of handouts being used, and the proportion of published stories using public relations-generated information, might increase. And then public relations practitioners could claim greater success at setting the media agenda, something they certain desire to do.

The media-public relations relationship also might be improved if fewer of an organization's informational handouts were self-serving. Too many handouts that include only the "party line" attributed only to a single "party line" spokesman are being relegated to too many media scrap heaps. The media clearly favor the multiple-source, multiple-perspective version of the news. Again, if public relations practitioners provided this varied perspective rather than their current one-sided handouts, perhaps the proportion of handouts being used and the proportion of published stories using public relations-generated information might increase. And that, too, would make public relations practitioners more successful vis a vis the media.

From the standpoint of the public relations practitioner, the relationship might be improved if the media defined reality to include the daily bread of mundane activity as well as the spectacular events that "make" page one or lead off the six o'clock news. The media in this study ignored, by and large, the proclamations and the personnel announcements, two categories of events that are the bread and butter of everyday White House activity. But as long as these routine goings-on are pushed aside to make room in the media for the spectacular and sensational, the media audience will be presented with a sensationalized view of what's real. Only when the ordinary is made as much a part of the media agenda as the spectacular will the public receive the complete picture.

But one may well ask whether the public knows the difference -- or cares, if it does know. Is anyone out there in the mass media audience aware that what the mass media dishes up in the way of news about an entity or individual -- be it the White House and President Reagan or another organization and its head -- is something less than the total of information that exists? Does anyone out there care that the truth according to the White House and President Reagan, or to another organization and its head, is a different truth than that of the news media? Would the media audience perceive itself better informed or somehow better off than it is now if it could receive White House "truth" rather than an edited media version?

Those are some of the questions currently being asked and examined in a followup study of newspaper readers and their part of the agenda-setting process involving the source and the media on the one hand, and the media and their audiences on the other.

FOOTNOTES

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2 Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of the Mass Media," Public Opinion Quarterly, 36: 176-187.

3 Bernard C. Cohen, The Press and Foreign Policy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 13.

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6 Ibid., pp. 15-26.

7 Judy VanSlyke Turk, "Subsidizing the News: Public Information Officers and Their Impact on Media Coverage of State Government," Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1985; Judy VanSlyke Turk, "Information Subsidies and Influence," Public Relations Review Vol. 112, No. 3 (Fall 1985), pp. 10-25; and Judy VanSlyke Turk, "Public Relations' Influence on the News," Newspaper Research Journal Vo. 7, No. 4 (Summer 1986), pp. 15-27.

8 Merrie Spaeth, former director of the White House Office of Media Relations, in a discussion of the decision to begin an electronic White House News Service. The news service was intended to provide verbatim press releases and other public information handouts to journalists outside Washington and to anyone with a personal computer and modem who wanted to access that verbatim information. The White House News Service did go on-line, briefly, in 1985, but the experiment was not successful and the service was terminated in December 1985.

9 Michael B. Grossman and Martha J. Kumar, Portraying the President: The White House and the News Media (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 6.

10 Grossman and Kumar, p. 14.

11 Grossman and Kumar, p. 4.

12 See David K. Berlo, The Process of Communication (New York: Holt, 1960); Bernard Berelson and Gary A. Steiner, Human Behavior (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964), chapter 13; Wilbur Schramm, ed., Mass Communication (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1960); Idem., The Process and Effect of Mass Communication (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961).

13 Grossman and Kumar, p. 251.

14 Hoyt Purvis, ed., The Presidency and the Press (Austin: LBJ School of Public Affairs, University of Texas, 1976), pp. 17-18.

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20 Leon V. Sigal, Reporters and Officials: The Organization and Politics of Newsmaking (Lexington: D. C. Heath, 1973), pp. 135-140.

21 Ann Gostyn Serow, "Mass Media and National Politics: The Question of Bias in News Reporting," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1975), passim.

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23 Grossman and Kumar, p. 322.

24 Kenneth W. Thompson, ed., Three Press Secretaries on the Presidency and the Press, volume five in a series funded by the John and Mary R. Markle Foundation (New York: University Press of America, 1983), p. 13.

25 See, for example, Serow, "Mass Media and National Politics," op. cit., and Grossman and Kumar, Portraying the President, op. cit.

26 Scott M. Cutlip, "Third of Newspapers' Content PR-Inspired," Editor and Publisher, May 26, 1962, p. 68.

27 Lynda Lee Kaid, "Newspaper Treatment of a Candidate's News Releases," Journalism Quarterly 53: 135-137 (1976).

28 William P. Martin and Michael W. Singletary, "Newspaper Treatment of State Government Releases," Journalism Quarterly 58: 93-96 (1981).

29 Turk, "Subsidizing the News," op. cit.

30 Ibid.

31 Stephen Hess, The Washington Reporters (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1981), p. 18.

32 Turk, "Subsidizing the News," op. cit.

33 Scott M. Cutlip, "Government Public Relations," in Informing the People: A Public Affairs Handbook, p. 27. Edited by Ray E. Hiebert, Michael R. Naver and Kenneth Rabin (New York: Longman, 1981).

34 Because this publication includes only public information "handouts" disseminated on paper, in written form, the publication is a less-than-complete record of informational exchanges between media and White House press staff since so many of those contacts are undoubtedly made by telephone or in person. But it is the most comprehensive documentation of White House public relations output available without participant-observer data gathering.

35 See Martin and Singletary, "Newspaper Treatment of State Government Releases," op. cit., and Turk, "Subsidizing the News," op. cit.

36 Linda P. Morton, "How Newspapers Choose the Releases They Use," Public Relations Review Vol. 12, No. 3 (Fall 1986), pp. 22-27.

37 Hess, The Washington Reporters, pp. 96-110 passim.

38 See Cutlip, "Third of Newspapers' Content PR-Inspired," op. cit., and Kaid, "Newspaper Treatment of a Candidate's News Releases," op. cit.

39 Turk, "Subsidizing the News," op. cit.

40 Statistically significant at the .01 level. Chi-square DF=2, F=74.501.

41 Statistically significant at the .01 level. Chi-square DF=17, F=104.053.

42 Hess, The Government/Press Connection, op. cit.; Hess, The Washington Reporters, op. cit.; and Turk, "Subsidizing the News," op. cit.

TABLE 1

Use of White House Handouts
In Published News Stories

	#	%
Stories using information	146	17.3
Stories not using information	700	82.7
	846	100.0

TABLE 2

Use of Information
In White House Handouts

	#	%
Handouts from which media used information	39	29.5
Handouts from which media did not use information	91	68.9
	132	100.0

TABLE 3

Subjects of Published News Stories

Subject	#	%
Foreign policy	256	30.3
Defense	110	13.0
Economy	93	11.0
Personalities	76	9.0
Government investigations	73	8.6
Legislation	68	8.0
Government operations	41	4.8
Health and welfare	34	4.0
Ceremonial events, occasions	28	3.3
Agriculture	18	2.1
Politics	17	2.0
Regulatory policy	10	1.2
Business	8	< 1.0
Energy	5	< 1.0
Environment	5	< 1.0
Government scandals	2	< 1.0
Consumer affairs	1	< 1.0
Education	1	< 1.0
	846	100.0

TABLE 4

Formats of White House Handouts

Format	#	%
Personnel announcement	51	38.6
News release	23	17.4
Text of speech	17	12.9
Transcript of interview or press conference	12	9.1
Draft of legislation	7	5.3
Other	13	9.9
	132	100.0*

*Does not add to 100% due to rounding

TABLE 5

Subjects of White House Handouts
Compared With Subjects of Published News Stories

		Handouts		News Stories	
	Rank	#	%	#	%
Subject					
Foreign policy	1	32	24.2	256	30.3
Defense	5	9	6.8	110	13.0
Economy	3	12	9.1	93	11.0
Personalities	10	2	1.5	76	9.0
Government investigations	9	3	2.3	73	8.6
Legislation	7	5	3.8	68	8.0
Government operations	2	24	18.2	41	4.8
Health and welfare	4	10	7.6	34	4.0
Ceremonial events, occasions	6	6	4.6	28	3.3
Agriculture	7	5	3.8	18	2.1
Politics	10	2	1.5	17	2.0
Regulatory policy	4	10	7.6	10	1.2
Business	5	9	6.8	8	<1.0
Energy	10	2	1.5	5	<1.0
Environment	9	3	2.3	5	<1.0
Government scandals	12	0	0.0	2	<1.0
Consumer affairs	11	1	<1.0	1	<1.0
Education	9	3	2.3	1	<1.0
		132	100.0	84c	

100.0

TABLE 6

Subjects of White House Handouts
Used in Published News Stories

Subject	#	%/used	%/total
Foreign policy	16	41.0	12.1
Defense	2	5.1	1.5
Economy	3	7.7	2.3
Personalities	1	2.6	<1.0
Government investigations	3	7.7	2.3
Legislation	1	2.6	<1.0
Government operations	5	12.8	3.8
Health and welfare	0	0	0
Ceremonial events, occasions	5	12.8	3.8
Agriculture	1	2.6	<1.0
Politics	1	2.6	<1.0
Regulatory policy	2	50.0	1.5
Business	0	0	0
Energy	0	0	0
Environment	0	0	0
Government scandals	0	0	0
Consumer affairs	0	0	0
Education	0	0	0
	39	100.0*	29.6

*Does not add to 100% due to rounding

TABLE 7

Format of Published News Stories

Format	#	%
Hard news story	577	68.2
Signed column or editorial	103	12.1
News analysis, backgrounder	63	7.4
Feature story	32	3.8
Photo with caption	31	3.7
Editorial cartoon	31	3.7
Reprint of speech text	4	<1.0
Transcript of interview or press conference	4	<1.0
Reprint of proclamation text	1	<1.0
	846	100.0*

*Does not add to 100% because of rounding

TABLE 8

Evaluative Tone of Published News Stories
By Subject of Story

	Favorable		Unfavorable		Neutral	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Subject						
Foreign policy	10	3.9	38	14.8	208	81.3
Defense	7	6.4	36	32.7	67	60.9
Economy	1	1.1	12	12.9	80	86.0
Personalities	9	11.8	7	9.2	60	79.0
Government investigations	1	1.4	8	11.0	64	87.7
Legislation	1	1.5	20	29.4	47	69.1
Government operations	1	2.4	11	26.8	29	70.7
Health and welfare	1	2.9	10	29.4	23	67.7
Ceremonial events, occasions	2	7.1	0	0	26	92.9
Agriculture	0	0	1	12.5	7	87.5
Politics	0	0	3	17.7	14	82.4
Regulatory policy	0	0	3	30.0	7	70.0
Business	0	0	1	12.5	7	87.5
Energy	0	0	0	0	5	100.0
Environment	0	0	0	0	5	100.0
Government scandals	0	0	0	0	2	100.0
Consumer affairs	0	0	1	100.0	0	0
Education	0	0	0	0	1	100.0
	33		152		641	